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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 001049

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNEP](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDIS AND PGA ON REVISED STATEMENT FOR INTERFAITH
DIALOGUE

REF: USUN 1042

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a November 9 meeting, Ambassador Khalilzad and Saudi FM Prince Saud discussed a revised draft statement (see text and action request in paragraph 5) that reflects changes requested by the EU. (Comment: The statement appears to retain all the elements specifically requested by the Department while removing some of the controversial parts. End Comment) Prince Saud said that in a meeting on November 7 with President of the General Assembly (PGA) d'Escoto, Saud made clear to the PGA that while he can say whatever he wants in his opening speech on the morning of November 12, when he reads the statement at the conclusion of the meeting on November 13 he must read it exactly as written. Ambassador Khalilzad confirmed that he would strongly reinforce that message in his meeting with the PGA later that day.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad and Saud went over the options if the PGA does not agree: holding a joint press conference with the King and SYG Ban, or with Saud and the Deputy Secretary General (if Ban does not stay for the second day of the meeting); or circulating the statement as a document of the General Assembly. They also discussed attendance at the meeting, noting that UK PM Gordon Brown and Afghan President Karzai will now both be there. Prince Saud expressed surprise that SYG Ban will not attend, calling it "unprecedented" and saying, "We told him we are shocked" at his absence. Ambassador Khalilzad noted that he would be seeing the SYG the next day and would raise this with him again.

¶3. (C) In his meeting shortly thereafter with the PGA, Ambassador Khalilzad explained to the PGA that there are two issues: 1) what the PGA says in his own speech at the opening of the meeting; and 2) the statement that could be issued by the PGA at the end of the meeting, which is essentially a summary of what was discussed at the meeting. Ambassador Khalilzad gave the PGA the revised statement and assured him that it had been agreed to by the EU. The PGA read it over and said, "I have absolutely no objection," adding that he especially liked the final two paragraphs, which he felt said everything necessary. The Ambassador confirmed with the PGA three times during the conversation that the PGA was happy with the statement and would read it exactly as written. The PGA agreed that the Ambassador could tell the Saudis and others that he would read this statement unchanged at the end of the meeting.

¶4. (C) The PGA said that his opening speech would focus on asking people to draw from their innermost sacred values and put them to use in promoting interfaith dialogue. He noted that he had removed from his draft anything that might be deemed offensive by anyone, and added that he had agreed to share his draft speech with Prince Saud at the end of the first day (November 12), since he would not put the final touches on it until he heard what people said during the first day of the meeting. (Note: We will seek clarification

on this point from the PGA, since he is scheduled to make his own speech at the beginning/beginning of the first day. End Note.)

15. (SBU) Action request: Post requests that Dept. provide clearance for the revised text below.

Begin revised text of Saudi statement:

General Assembly meeting on interfaith dialogue

At the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud of Saudia Arabia, the General Assembly convened a plenary high level meeting during its sixty-third session on 12 and 13 November 2008 under item 45 culture of peace.

The meeting reaffirmed the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The meeting further recalled that all States have pledged themselves under the Charter to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including freedoms of religion and expression, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Concerned about serious instances of intolerance, discrimination, hatred expressions, and harassment of minority religious communities of all faiths, participating states underlined the importance of promoting dialogue, understanding, and tolerance among human beings, as well as respect for all their diverse religions, cultures and beliefs.

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Participating states affirmed their rejection of the use of religion to justify the killing of innocent people and actions of terrorism, violence and coercion, which directly contradict the commitment of all religions to peace, justice and equality.

Taking note of the World Conference on Dialogue held in Madrid between 16 and 18 July 2008 under the patronage of the Kings of Saudi Arabia and Spain, the General Assembly reiterated its call for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding through dialogue, and for supporting the initiatives of religious leaders, civil society, and states seeking to entrench the culture of peace, understanding, tolerance, and respect for human rights among the proponents of various faiths, cultures, and civilizations.

Participating states expressed their commitment to strengthening and supporting existing mechanisms within the United Nations for promoting human rights and tolerance, protecting the environment, spreading education, eradicating poverty, and fighting drug abuse, crime and terrorism, noting the positive role of religions, beliefs and moral humanitarian principles in tackling these challenges.

End statement text.

Khalilzad